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Forgetful
Letter B



By Richard A. Clarke



The Forgetful Letter B

THE FORGETFUL LETTER B

*Fun-filled Tales for
Very Little People*

By

Richard A. Clarke

Illustrated by

Josephine Weage



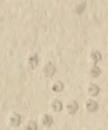
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CHAPTER 1

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About His Two Aunts

I am the Forgetful Letter B, and I live in the Alphabet, next to its beginning.

Perhaps you wonder why I am called the Forgetful Letter B; well, you shall learn why, later on.

Just now I wish to tell you about my two aunts who live in the Alphabet. One of my aunts is the letter O, and the letter Q is the other. They are very nice old souls; and once, long ago, they were twins—both were O's.

Yes, once they were twins; but one day one of them lost her temper and acted very rudely. She stuck out

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her tongue at her sister. Wasn't that perfectly dreadful?

Oh, my! it was the most dreadful thing that had ever happened in the Alphabet. And my rude aunt was severely punished.

She was told that she must never put her tongue back into her mouth again. She must keep it out, forever and forever.

And from that day to this she has been the letter Q.

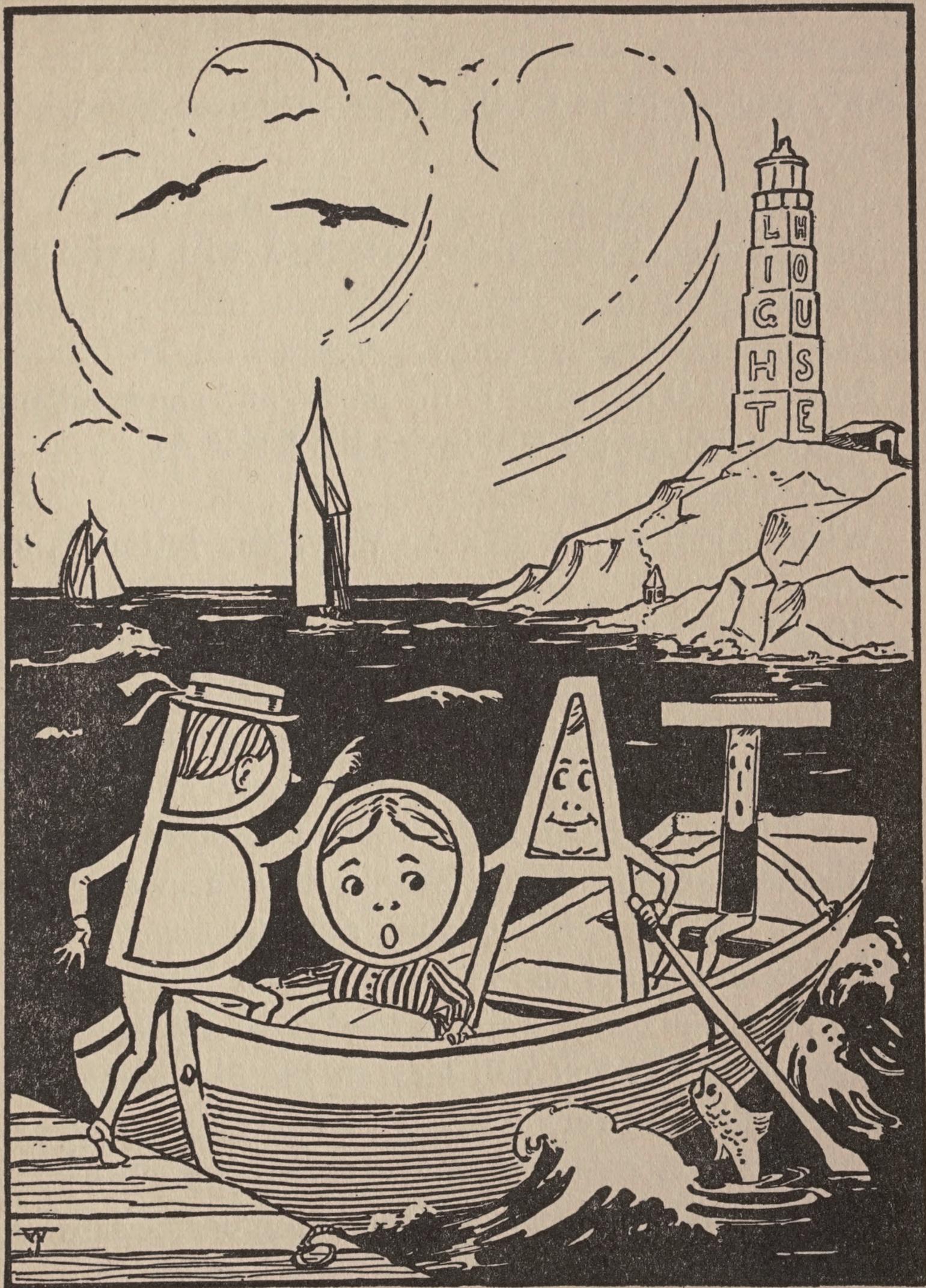
Do you understand? Aunty Q is exactly like aunty O, excepting that her tongue is out.

You have not yet found out why I am said to be forgetful, have you? Never mind; you will learn later on.

My aunt O is a maiden lady, but my aunt Q is married. Her husband's name is U, and aunty Q is quite fond of him. She likes him so well that she never, never goes to a party unless he goes along.

Did you know that the letters in the Alphabet are always giving *parties*? Why, were it not for letter-parties, there would be no *words*.

Maybe you did not know this, but it is the truth. To show you what a letter-party is like, I will give one this very minute. It must be a small party, as I am too tired to give a large one. I will invite three letters



The Forgetful Letter B

to my party. First I will invite the letter B—which is myself:

B—

Now, I am at my party. Next, I will invite my aunt O:

BO—

See? Aunt O has come to my party, and she is sitting beside me; so, next I will invite the letter A:

BOA—

Whom shall I ask next? Why, the letter T, of course:

BOAT.

There! I am having a letter-party, and it has made the word BOAT. It is a very nice party, and we shall go for a ride on the lake.

—I have changed my mind about going for a ride on the lake, as we might tumble into the water and get wet. Let us talk about my aunt Q.

As I was saying, she is very fond of her husband, Mr. U, and she never thinks of going to a letter-party without him. If you will look in the dictionary you will see this is all very true. Wherever there is a word—I mean a letter-party—in which my aunt Q is to be found, you will see her husband sitting beside her. Is this not splendid of my aunt?

Tells About His Two Aunts

Are you still wondering why I am said to be forgetful?

I think it is too bad that aunt Q's husband is not thoughtful of her. He goes to parties—oh, ever so many of them—and never thinks of taking his wife. And then she sits in the Alphabet, and cries, and darns socks.

One day Mr. U went to a letter-party and did not take his wife. He had a most horrid time. Here is the kind of party he went to:

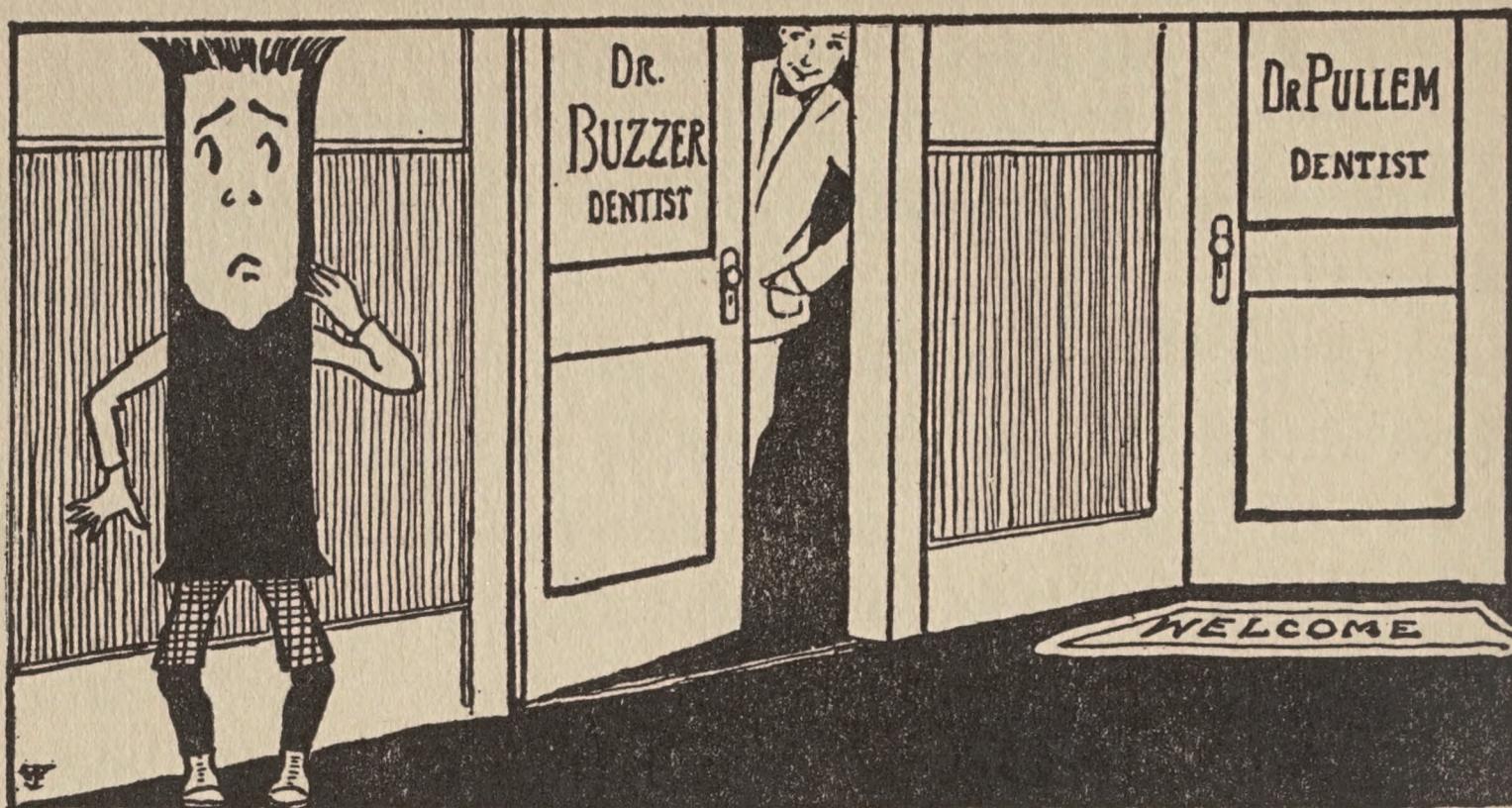
HUNGRY!

Ho, ho, ho! Mr. U came home from the party almost starved. And it served him right!

Now, you must pay very close attention. I am going to tell you a secret about the letter K, and you must promise never to tell.

—Oh, dear, me! I have forgotten what the secret is. How stupid of me!

Well, you have learned at last why I am called the Forgetful Letter B.



CHAPTER 2

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Unfortunate Letter I

Now that I have told you about my two aunts, I must tell you about my unfortunate cousin, the letter I.

Poor fellow! He is indeed the most unfortunate being in all the wide world.

You must not think, from this, that cousin I is always breaking a leg, or being ill on circus day, or swallowing his spending-pennies. Oh, no—something worse!

My poor cousin is always being blamed for doing things that others do—and should not do. Why, only this morning, a little boy named Johnnie threw a stone and broke a window-pane.

Tells About the Unfortunate Letter I

Was that any fault of my cousin's? Was the letter I to blame? No, not at all.

After Johnnie threw the stone his mother said to him, "Johnnie, my dear, who broke this window-pane? Tell me the truth!"

And this is what Johnnie said: "I broke the window-pane, mother."

Yes, as truly as I am telling you, Johnnie blamed my innocent cousin I. He said to his mother, "I broke the window-pane."

My cousin did NOT break that pane of glass!

How could he break *anything* with a stone, when he is not strong enough to even lift a stone—let alone *throw* one!

And do you know what happened to the poor letter I because Johnnie told this about him?

Why, as soon as it was heard of in the Alphabet, the letter J gave a letter-party, and invited A and I and L. And this was what the party was like:

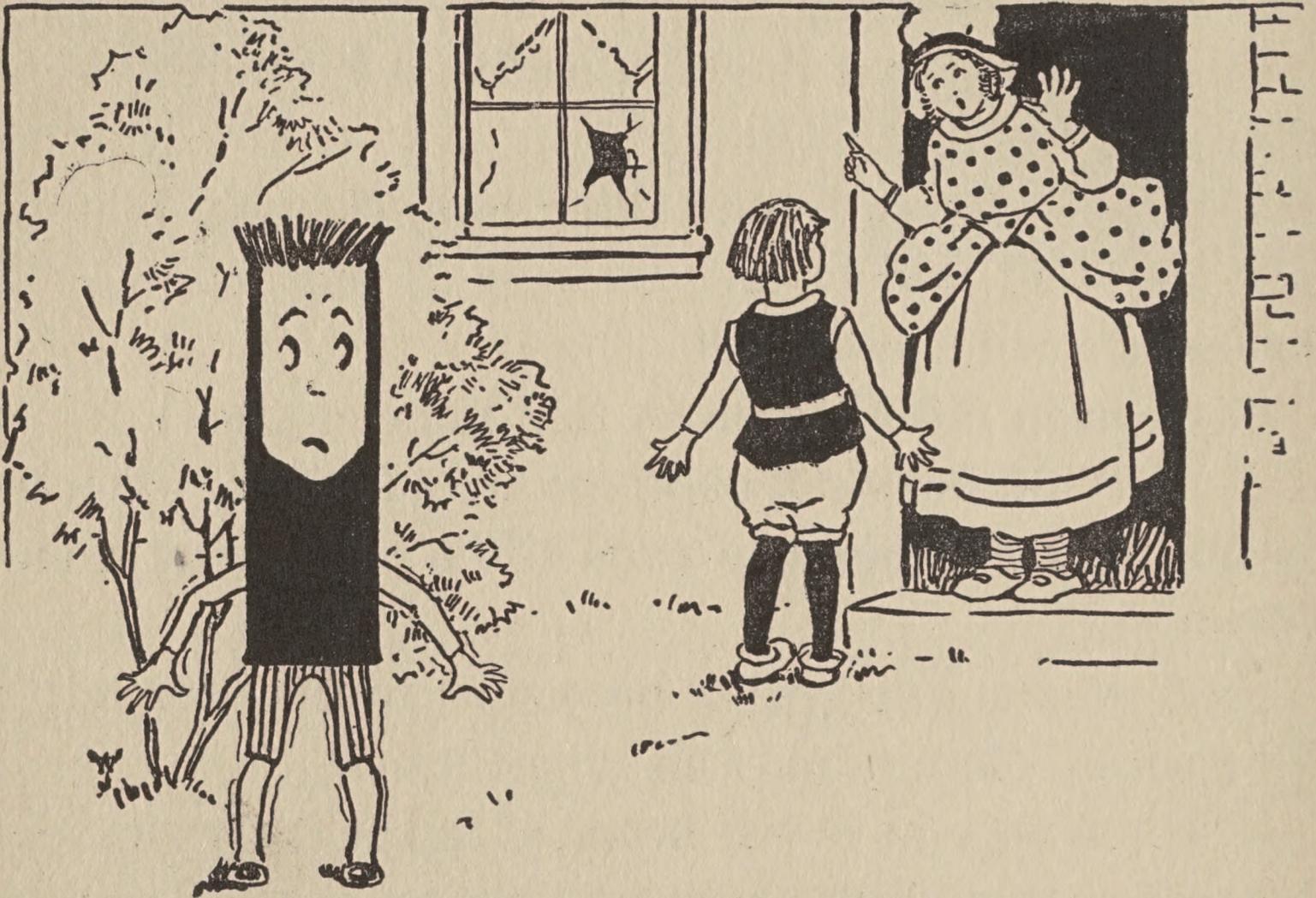
JAIL.

You understand? My cousin I was put in jail. My poor cousin I was arrested and locked up! It was a shame, too. It was a great big shame!

Now I will tell you what happened last Saturday afternoon. Last Saturday afternoon a little girl whose

The Forgetful Letter B

name is Mary Ann was playing with a little girl named Susie. Mary Ann's mother came to them and said, "Here is a plate of nice pink ice cream—who will eat it?"



Susie shook her head and said, "I will not eat it."

Just think of Susie saying such a thing! And all the while my cousin I was starving for some pink ice cream.

Then Mary Ann clapped her hands and said, "Oh, oh! Goody, goody! I will eat the ice cream!"

My gracious! Wasn't my cousin I glad when Mary

Tells About the Unfortunate Letter

Ann said this. His mouth began to water at once, because he thought surely he would get the pink ice cream. But, alas, what do you think happened?

The ice cream was not given to I.

It was given to Mary Ann—and she ate it all. My poor cousin was so disappointed that he did not know what to do. And then, after Mary Ann had eaten the ice cream she said, “I should not have eaten this. Now I will get the toothache.”

My cousin was surprised to hear Mary Ann say this. How could he possibly get the toothache from eating the ice cream, when he had not even tasted it?

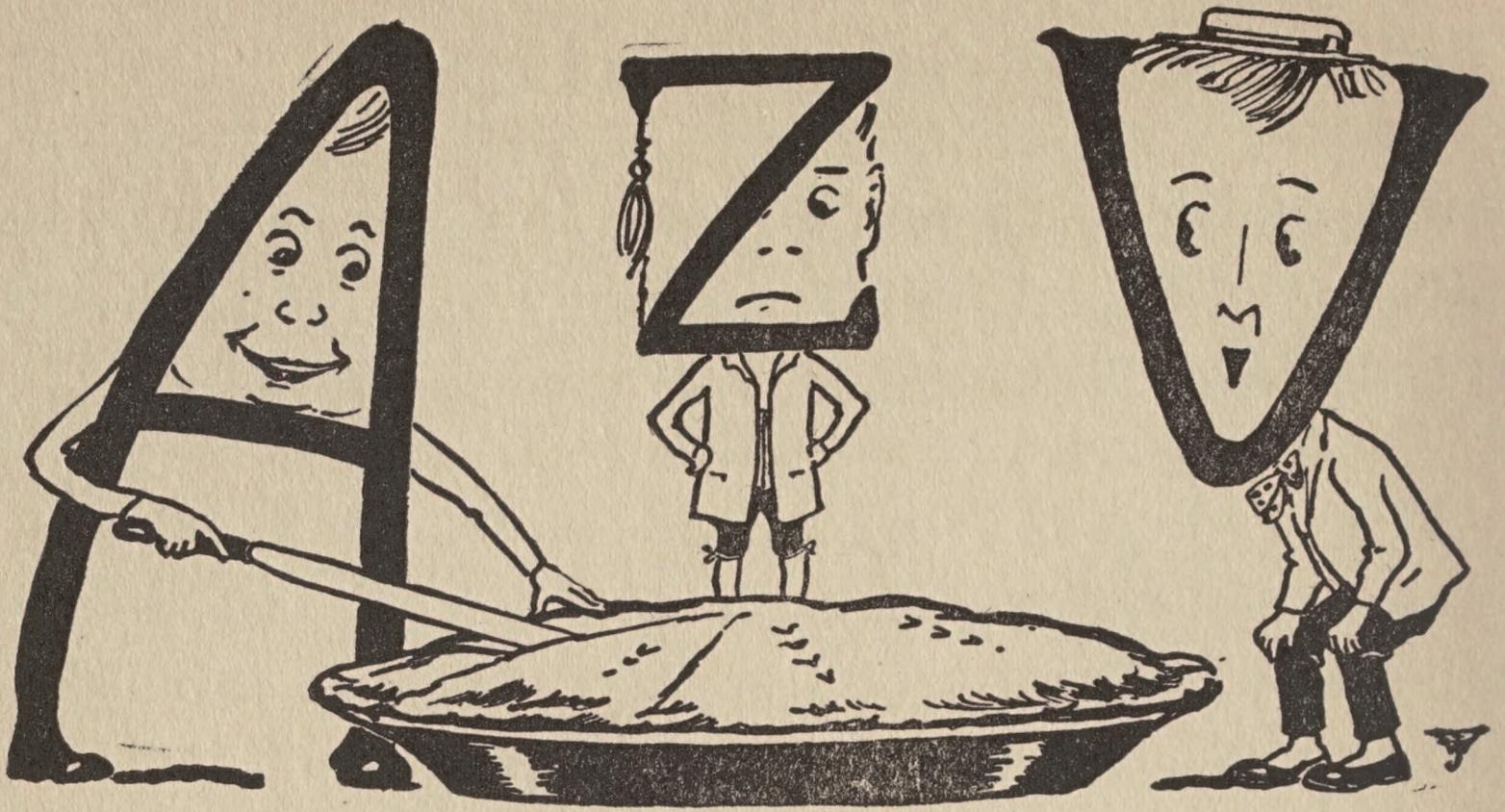
But Mary Ann’s mother said, “That means a trip to the dentist next Tuesday afternoon.”

Mary Ann replied, “Yes, on Tuesday afternoon I must have the tooth pulled!”

My, but my cousin was frightened when he heard this. And he was frightened still more when Mary Ann shook her head sadly and groaned, “Oh, it will hurt ever and ever so much!”

And now my poor unhappy cousin, the letter I, is sitting in the Alphabet quite sick at heart.

Alas! Alas! On next Tuesday afternoon he must have a tooth pulled!



CHAPTER 3

The Forgetful Letter B Tells All About President A

Ho, ho! Ha, ha!

Tee, hee, hee!

Do you hear me laughing?

I always laugh when I think of the time when letter A was elected President of the Alphabet.

It was so funny—so very, very funny!

Long, long ago, the letters of the Alphabet were all mixed up. They did not live in the neat apple-pie order they do now. Oh, no. And one day the letter A said to the other letters, “I have been thinking.”

The letter V frowned and asked, “What about—the pretty Miss C?”

Tells All About President A

A blushed and cried, "No, indeed! I am not *forever* thinking about the pretty letter C, like you are. I have been thinking of what a wonderful thing the Alphabet is. It is quite the most wonderful thing in all the wide world. And because of this we ought to have a King, or a Queen."

"Hurrah! That is a fine idea!" cried the letter V. "I will be the King, and pretty Miss C can be my Queen—if she wishes to."

"What are K-K-Kings for?" asked the letter Z, who stuttered very badly. "Are they g-g-g-good to eat?"

V turned pale. "Good to eat!" he gasped; "I guess I do not want to be the King!"

The letter A laughed and said, "No, no! Kings are not good to eat."

"N-n-not even when they are p-p-p-preserved, like s-s-strawberry jam?" stuttered the letter Z.

"No, indeed!" answered A. "Kings are *never* eaten."

"All right, then, I will be King," the letter V said, greatly relieved.

The letter A studied for a moment and then shook his head. He said, "Now that I think the matter over, I guess we will not have a King. What we need is a President, and I will be the President."

The Forgetful Letter B

“What does a President have to do?” asked V, looking puzzled.

“Well, I will tell you,” answered A, looking wise. “The President of the Alphabet must live at the beginning of the Alphabet, and he must see that all the letters behave themselves, and whenever there is pie for supper he must get the biggest piece.”

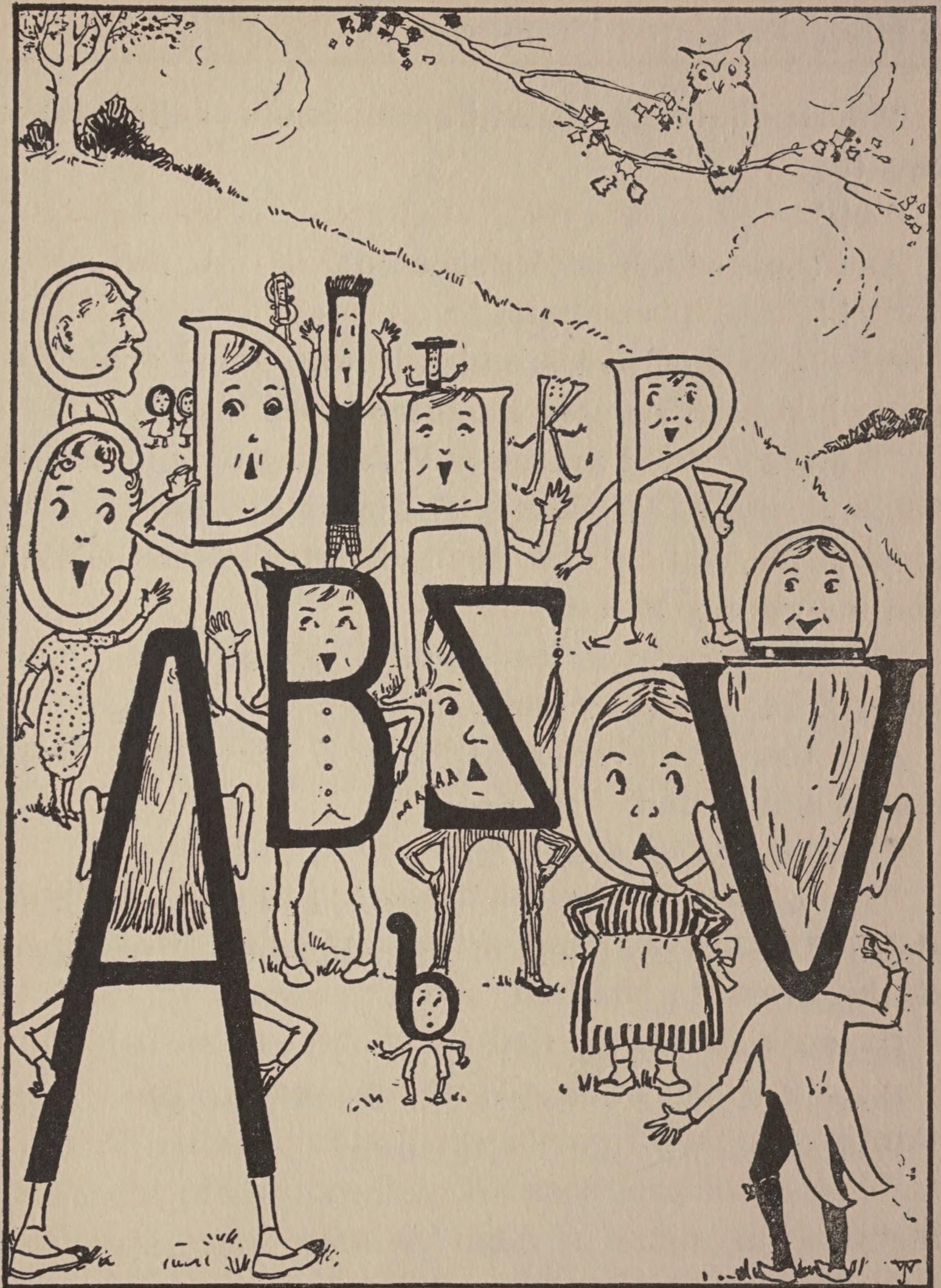
“I wish I could be the P-P-President!” exclaimed the stuttering Z. “What else must he d-d-do?”

“He must marry the pretty letter C,” shouted the letter V, and then he sang:

“And I am going to be the President,
I am going to be the President,
I am going to be the President!”

“Not so fast, not so fast,” said A; “the letters of the Alphabet shall hold an election and vote to see which of the two of us shall be their President.”

“I agree to that!” cried V. “The letters that want you for President can call out your name. The letters wanting me for President shall call my name. If your name is called the most times, then you are the President. If my name is called the most times, I am the President.”



Tells All About President A

The election took place at once. Some of the letters shouted:

“A!”

And some of the letters shouted:

“V!”

At the end of five minutes it was found that V's name had been shouted six more times than A's.

“Hurrah!” cried the letter V dancing up and down, “I have the most votes, and I will get the biggest piece of pie, and I will marry the pretty letter C! Will you marry me, Miss C?”

“Wait a minute, wait a minute!” shouted A. “The letter Z has not voted yet.”

And then the stuttering letter Z drew in a deep breath and roared:

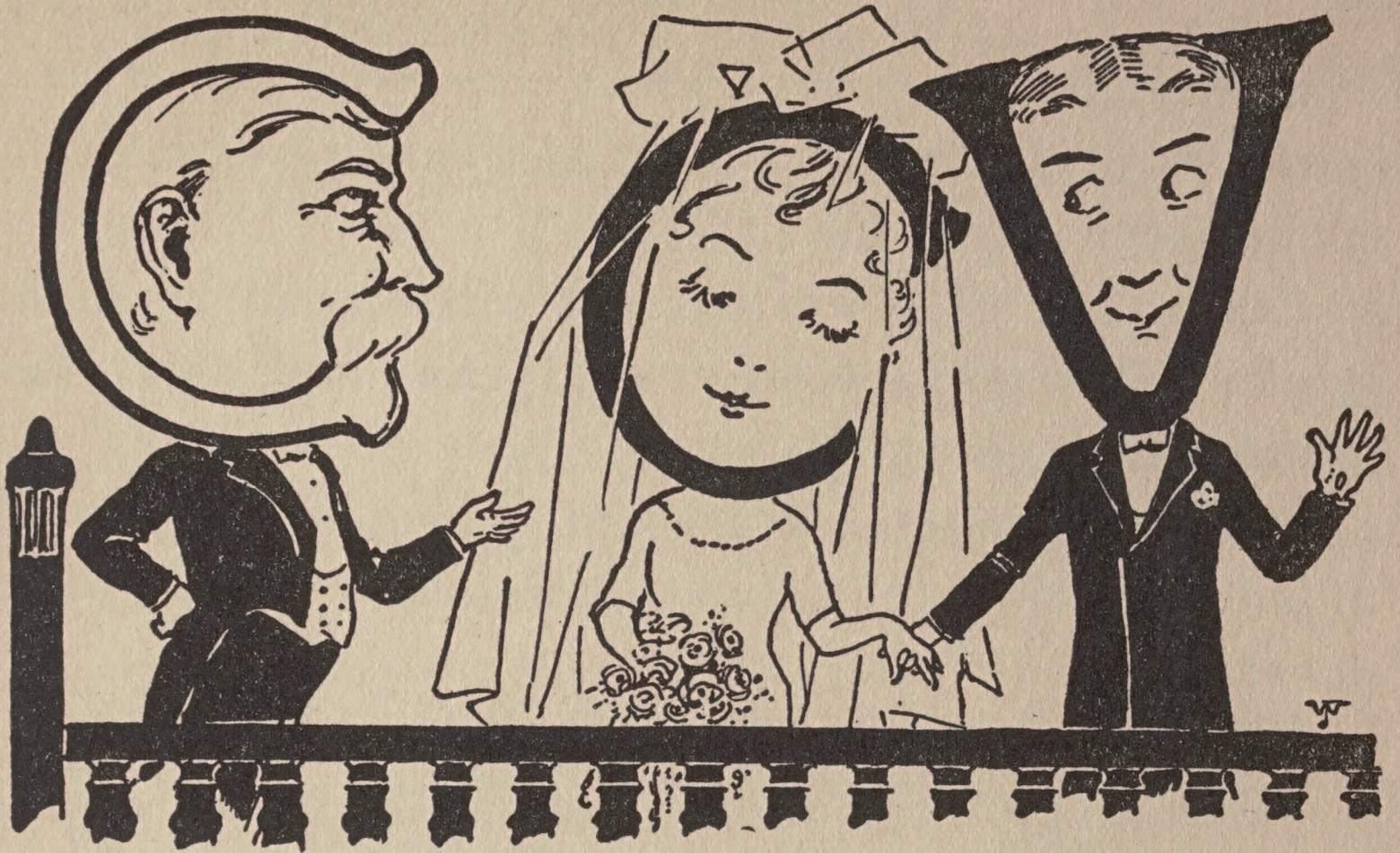
“A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A-A!”

“Ten more votes for the letter A, and that puts him ahead!” cried the letters of the Alphabet. “A is our President!”

Ha, ha, ha! Ho, ho, ho!

Doesn't it make you feel like laughing too?

Well, then, why don't you laugh?



CHAPTER 4

The Forgetful Letter B Tells the Story of the Proud G's Daughter

Not long after A was made President of the Alphabet, the letter V said to Miss C:

“Please, pretty letter C, will you marry me?”

And the pretty letter C blushed and answered, “I will marry you if my father, the proud letter G, is willing to have me do so.”

So V hastened to call upon G, and he whispered into his ear, “Please, sir, may I marry your daughter?”

The proud G frowned, and in a haughty voice he said, “I am very proud of my daughter, and I am very

The Forgetful Letter B

proud of myself. But I am not proud of you, and you shall never marry the pretty C.”

“Oh, dear me!” the letter V cried, and he never spoke to the proud G again for years, and years, and hundreds of years.

When five hundred years had passed, V made up his mind to speak to the haughty G again, and this is what he said:

“Why are you not proud of me?”

“Because you are not a President!” answered G as he tilted his nose high in the air and walked away.

“Oh, dear me!” the letter V moaned, and he never, never spoke to G again, for years and years and hundreds of years.

One day, after hundreds and hundreds of years had passed by, the proud letter G was talking to President A, when V chanced along. The letter V did not speak to the President, nor did he so much as nod to the proud G.

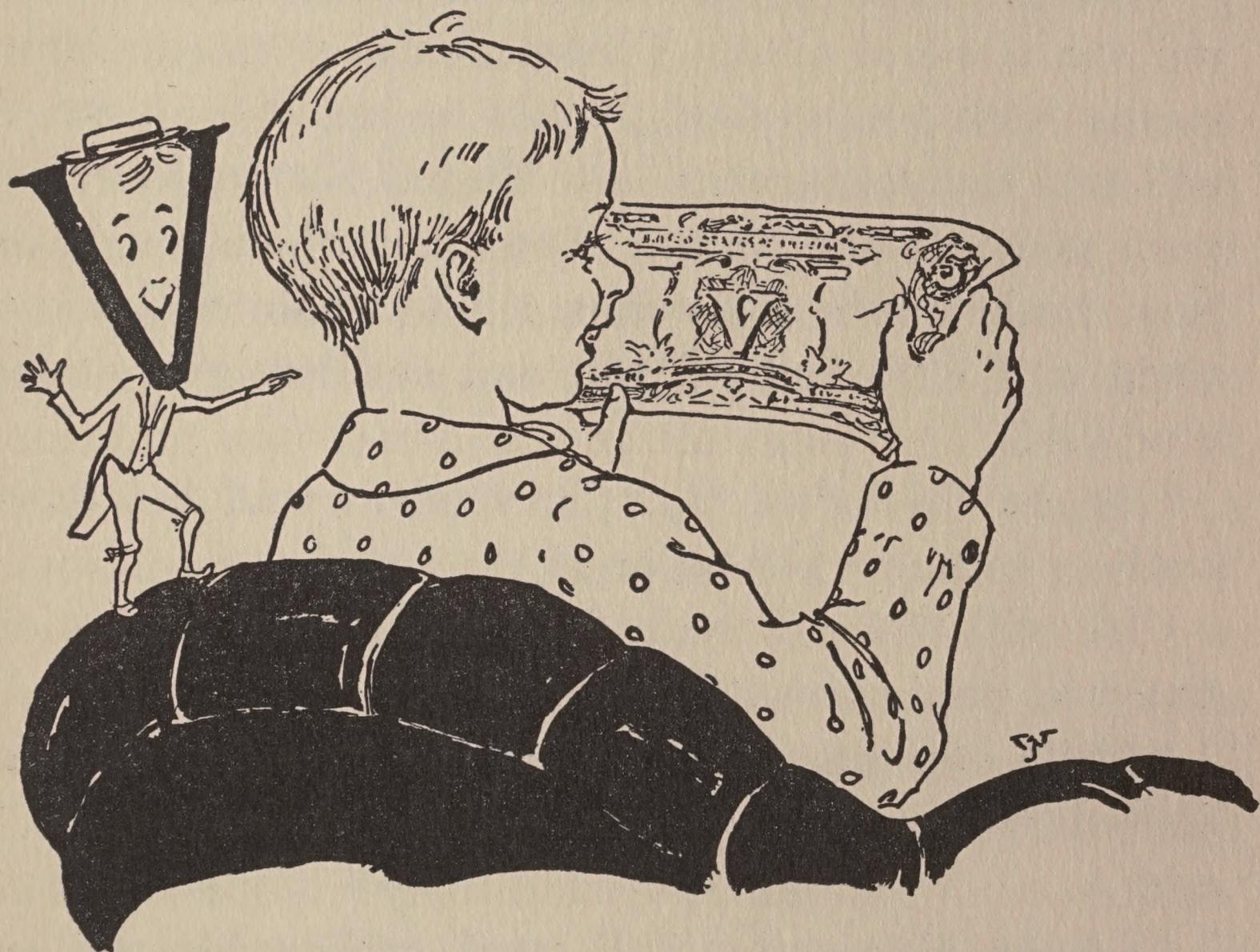
This made President A quite angry, and he whispered to the proud G, “What do you suppose ails that letter? Am I not good enough for him to notice?” Then he shouted after V, “Smarty! Smarty! Smarty!”

V turned about and said, “Huh! you had better not be calling me names!”

Tells of the Proud G's Daughter

President A cried again, "Smarty! Smarty! Smarty!"

"You just wait!" raged the letter V. "You will be sorry for your impudence. I am going to tell one of my Senators about you, and also I will tell one of my



Congressmen. They will attend to you!"

"Smarty!" shouted President A.

"Oh, o-o-o-o-oh! I know what I will do!" cried V. "I will tell the big policeman who stands guard in

The Forgetful Letter B

front of the grand White House I am going to live in —I will tell the big fierce policeman what you have been calling me, and he will—”

“Run along, Smarty!” interrupted the proud letter G, “run along, I tell you!”

V turned upon the proud G and cried, “Ho! I will tell the General of my United States Army to blow you up with gunpowder! And if he hasn’t the time, I will tell the Admiral of my United States Navy to push you into the ocean. And then when you have been pushed into the ocean, a big whale will come along and grab hold of you and swallow you down head-first!”

“Ho, ho!” laughed G, “the whale would not dare swallow so fine a person as I!”

“He will if the President of the United States of America wants him to,” declared V.

“Little you know about what the President of the United States of America wants whales to do,” said A.

“I know all about it!” V cried, puffing himself up like a frog. “I know all about it, because I am the President of the United States of America!”

“W-w-w-w-what is this?” gasped the proud G. “Say it again!”

Tells of the Proud G's Daughter

V made a stiff bow and tilted his head high in the air. "I said that I am the President of the United States of America," he replied, "and I wish to tell you, Mr. G, that I am going to marry your daughter."

The proud G turned pale. "W-w-w-when did you become President of—of—of the United States of America?" he stammered.

"I do not know when, and I do not care when," answered V. "I know that I *am* President, and that is enough for me, and it should be enough for you."

The proud and haughty letter G looked very thoughtful for a moment. Then he patted V upon the shoulder and shook him by the hand and smiled. "I am very, very proud of you!" he cried. "And you shall marry my pretty daughter!"

V blushed deeply at these words and looked ever so happy. "Is it not wonderful!" he whispered. "I am a President, and I am going to marry the pretty C!"

"Wonderful indeed!" chimed in the letter A. "But why have you kept it a secret from us?"

"Because it has been kept a secret from me," V replied. "I never knew a thing about it until yesterday."

"Well, well, well!" exclaimed G.

And then V explained. "Yesterday," he said, "I

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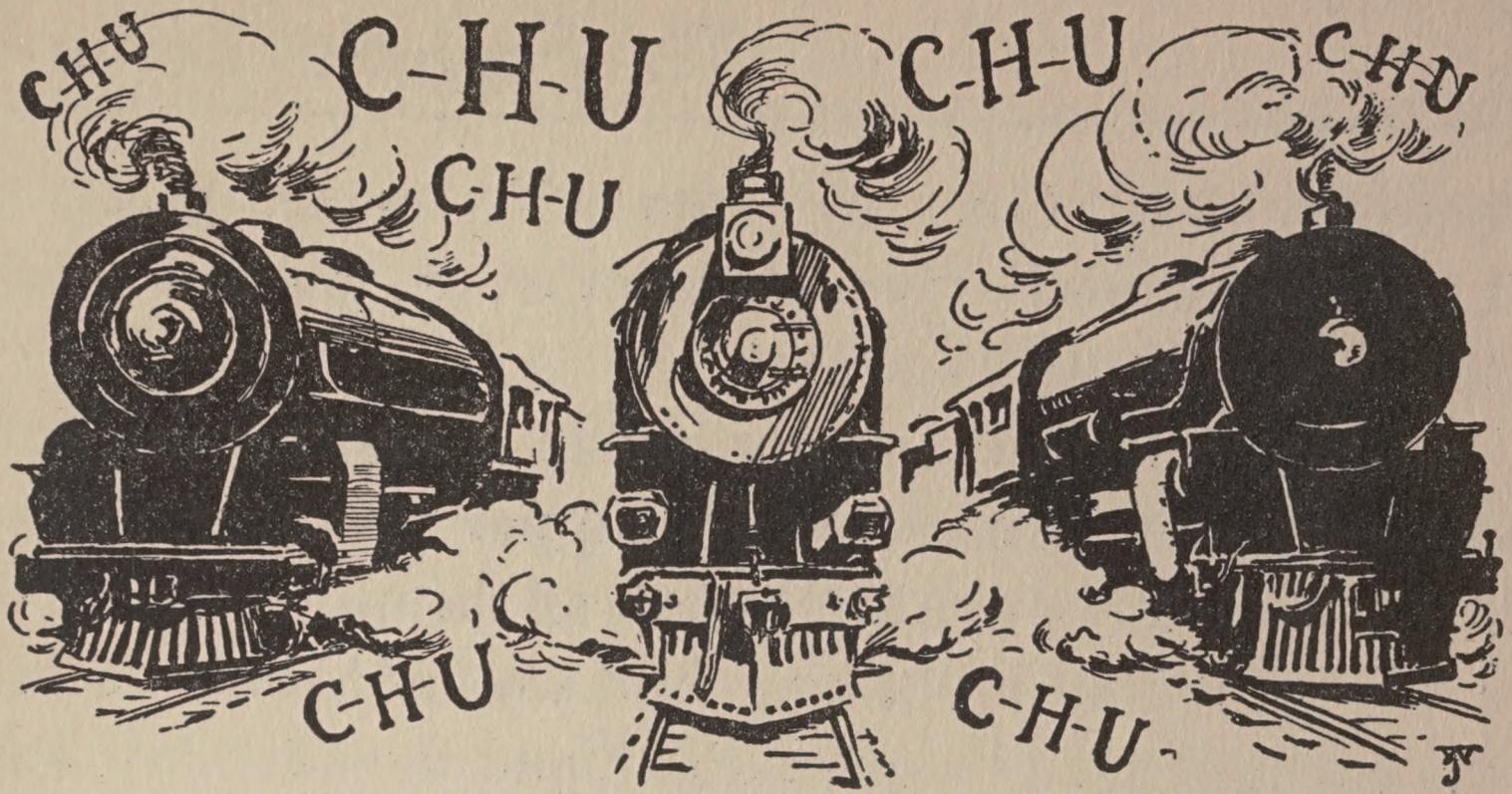
saw a man give his little boy a five dollar bill for a birthday present. The man told his little boy that he should be very proud of his five dollar bill because the picture of a President of the United States of America was printed upon it.”

“Did the man say it was *your* picture?” asked G.

“No, he didn’t say that,” answered V. “He did not *need* to say it. I could see for myself. I stole a peep at the five dollar bill and—goodness gracious sakes alive! there was my picture printed upon it! My picture!—A great big handsome letter V!”

Mr. G could hold himself no longer. He threw his arms around V and cried and wept, and wept and cried, and cried and wept. “I am so proud of you!” he shouted over and over again. “I am so proud of you, my wonderful President-of-the-United-States-son-in-law!”

And that night, at half past eight o’clock, there was a joyful wedding in the Alphabet.



CHAPTER 5

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Three Lost Letters

Are you ready for another story?

Yes?

All right.

Once upon a time, quite a number of years ago, my cousin C and my cousin H and my uncle U did not come home for supper one evening.

We had pickles and doughnuts and butter and water to eat, but C and H and U missed all these fine goodies because they did not come home.

The letter S, who cooked the supper, called at the top of his voice for my cousins and my uncle. The letter S shouted, "Come to supper, C, we are going to

The Forgetful Letter B

have pickles! Come to supper, H, we are going to have doughnuts! Come to supper, U, we are going to have water and butter!”

But my cousin C and my cousin H and my uncle U did not come. And after the supper was over, all we Alphabet letters went in search of them.

We hunted all night long, and we hunted all during the next day, and the next night, and the next day, and the NEXT night. Oh, well, we hunted and hunted, without doing any finding, and then we made up our minds that the three letters were lost.

Then we all sat down and cried.

Pretty soon a man came along and he asked, “What is wrong, little letters?”

And I said to the man, “My cousin C is lost, and my cousin H is lost, and my uncle U is lost!”

The kind man nodded, and he told us not to worry. He declared he would find our missing friends. Then he walked about, in this direction and in that direction, calling as loudly as he could, “Hello! Hello! C-H-U! —C-H-U!—Where are you?”

But the letter C and the letter H and the letter U did not answer, and the kind man came back and said to me, “They do not seem to hear me. Maybe my voice is not loud enough. But you need not worry. I

Tells About the Three Lost Letters

am a wonderful inventor, and I will build something that will have a *very* loud voice. I will send it over the land, far and near, to call the names of the lost ones.”

So the man built something that ate coal, and that puffed out black smoke like a dragon, and he called it by the name of “Engine.” Then the man made a track for the engine to walk upon, and the track was miles and miles long.

When the man had finished making these wonderful things, he smiled and patted himself on the head, and he was very proud. He whispered to the Engine, “Go, follow this track to wherever it may lead, and find the three lost letters. As you travel along, keep shouting the names of these letters, so that they may hear you, and answer.”

The Engine grunted and wheezed, and walked away. As it journeyed along the track it shouted over and over again, “C-H-U!—C-H-U!—CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU!”

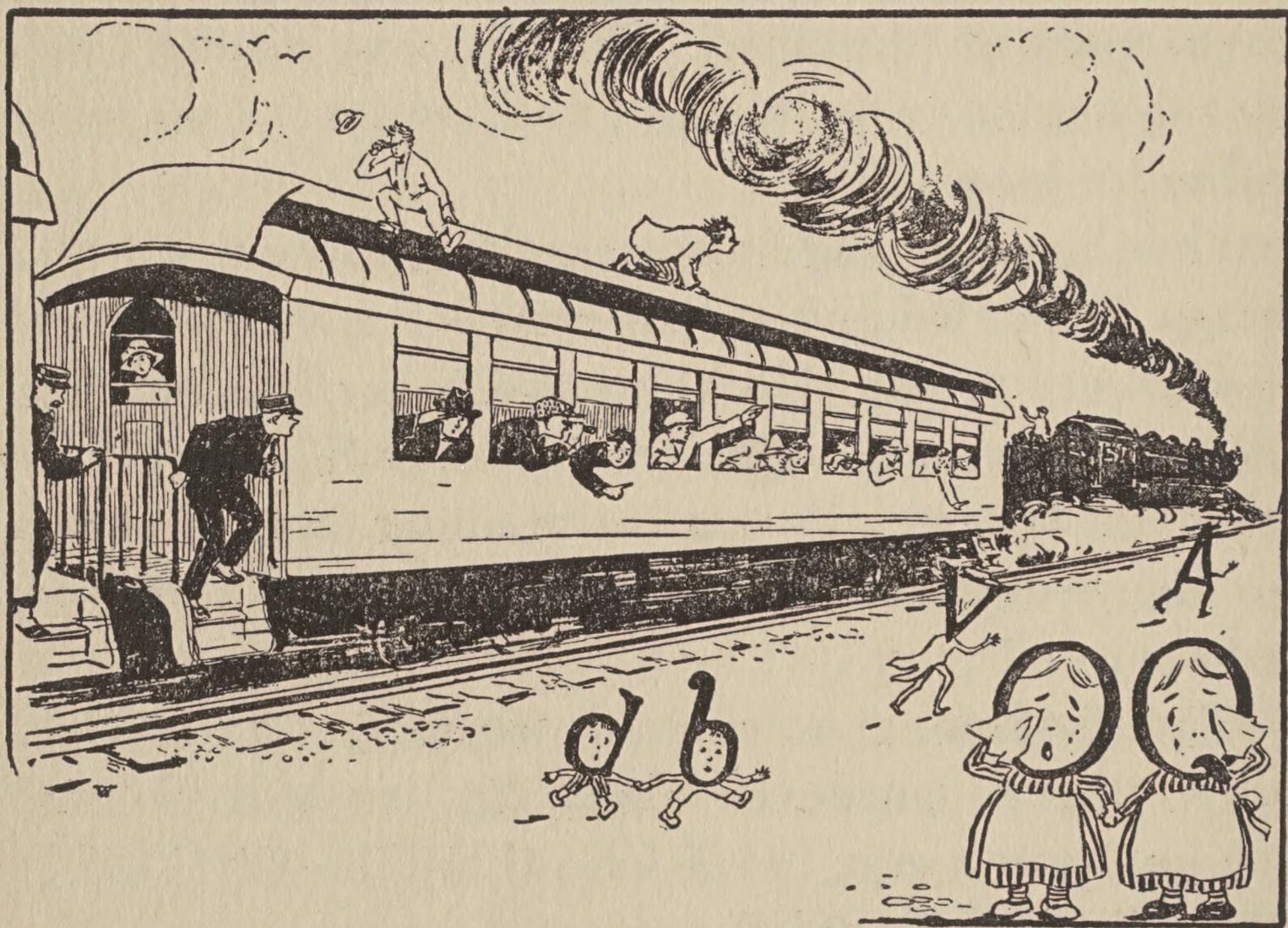
Oh, yes, it kept shouting the names of my two lost cousins and my lost uncle—“C-H-U!—C-H-U!—CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU!”

The Engine walked faster and faster, and the faster it walked the faster it called out the three names.

The Forgetful Letter B

But C and H and U did not answer.

At last the Engine reached the end of the track, and there it stopped. It felt very badly because the letters could not be found, and the kind man who invented the Engine, and was riding upon it, felt badly, too.



The kind man groaned, and the Engine wheezed. The man waved his arms and cried to the Engine, "Back up! we must find the lost letters. We must find C and H and U! Back up!"

So the Engine started to walk backwards upon the

Tells About the Three Lost Letters

track, shouting at the top of its harsh voice, shouting so loudly that sparks flew from its mouth, "C-H-U!—C-H-U! — CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU!"

And the kind man rang a bell, and tooted a whistle, which were a part of the Engine, and he kept a sharp watch ahead, but C and H and U did not answer.

When the Engine got back to where it had first started from, the kind man told it to stop. The letters of the Alphabet gathered round the man and he told them not to worry. He would never stop hunting until he had found the lost C and H and U, if it took five hundred years. He said he would build more Engines and lay more track. And he would build coaches to fasten to the engines, and he would fill the coaches with people, and tell the people to keep a watch out of the coach windows for the missing letters.

So more Engines were built, and more track was laid, and people were carried hither and thither all over the land, looking for C and H and U.

And day in and day out, night in and night out, the Engines walked and ran about on their tracks, shouting at the top of their voices, "C-H-U!—C-H-U!—CHU-CHU-CHU-CHU!" And the people in the coaches looked out of the windows, watching for the lost letters.

The Forgetful Letter B

And then, one day, the three letters were found. The letter K discovered my two cousins and my uncle. I forget where it was that K found them—but that does not matter.

They were found, and they came back again to live in the Alphabet, and K was given a reward. I forget what the reward was.

And—oh, gracious, me! I have been forgetting, all these years since my relatives were found, to tell the kind man about it.

That is the reason why the kind man is still sending out his Engines that shout, “C-H-U!—C-H-U!—CHU-CHU-CHU!” and that the Engines are pulling coaches filled with people who are looking out of the windows, watching, watching, watching.



CHAPTER 6

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Two Little-Brother Letters

Each letter of the Alphabet has a little brother.
Here is the letter K's little brother—k.

And here is the letter E's little brother—e.

K's little brother and E's little brother are about the
same age. Did you know that?

Now I will introduce you to M's little brother—m.

Ah, yes, and here is little a. He is the brother of
the President of the Alphabet.

Would you like to see *my* little brother? All right,
I will call him.

Little brother!—Little brother!—Little brother-r-

The Forgetful Letter B

r-r-r-r-r!—come here a minute, someone wants to see-e-e-e you!

There he is; my little brother—b. Would you care to hold him on your lap?

I know what let's do! You hold my little brother on your lap while I tell him a story. I will tell him a story about some bullets. It is a true story, but very, very sad; and I wish little b to hear it so he will not be wanting to own a bullet-shooting gun.

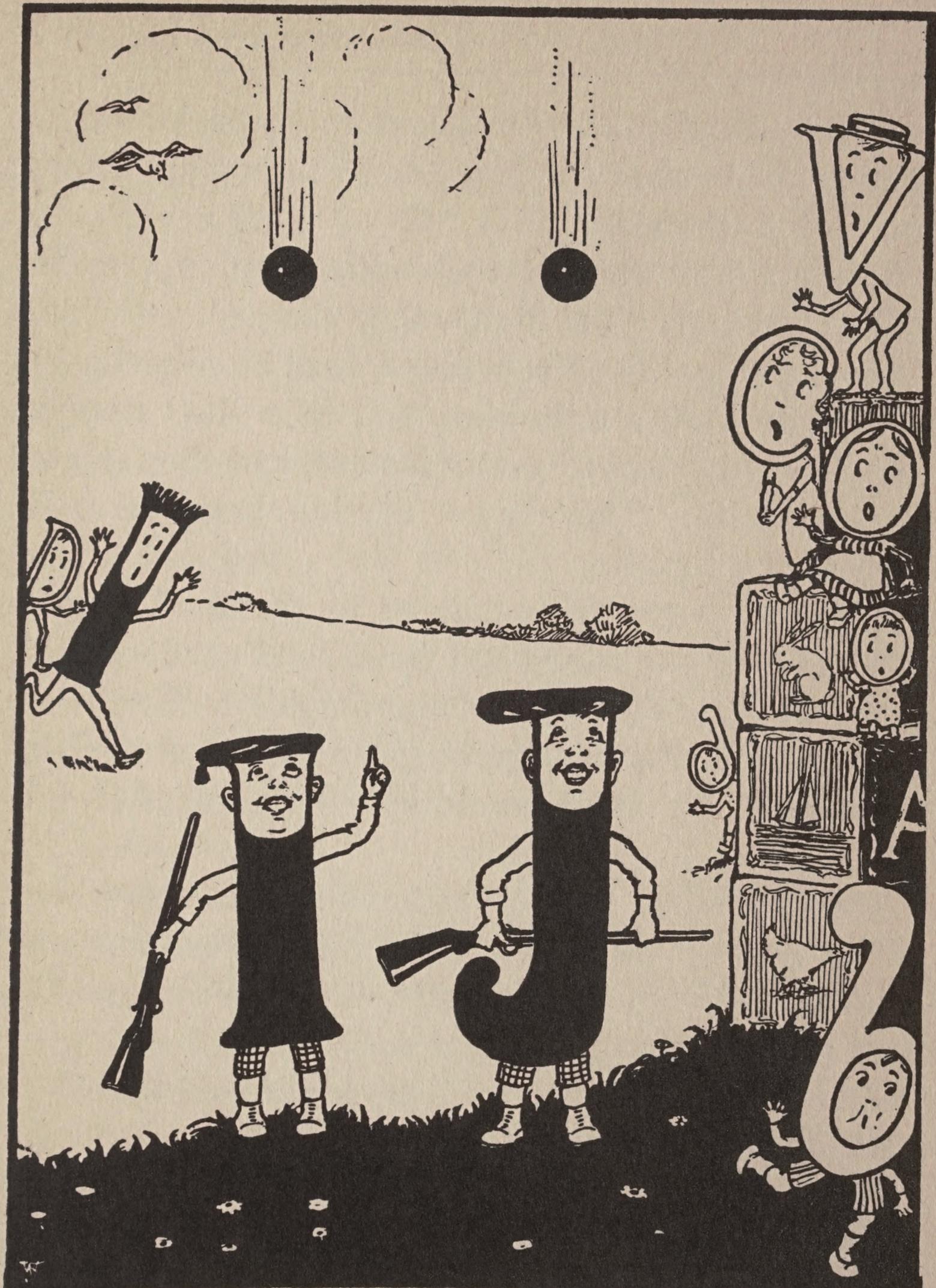
Now, you must please hold tightly to little b—especially when I come to the sad part of the story. And if you should start crying yourself, please hold your head to one side, so my little brother will not be caught in the rain.

Once upon a time there were two very bad little-brother letters, and they would never be good. I will not tell their names just now—but they were not k or g, nor b or d, nor f or z.

One day these two little-brother letters were each given a bullet-shooting gun with a bullet apiece.

And these two bad, bad, bad little-brother letters loaded the guns with the bullets, and they pointed the guns straight up in the air. O-o-o-o-oh! and they pulled the triggers!

“Bang!” roared the guns in one voice.



The Forgetful Letter B

“Whizzzzzzzzzzzzzz!” screeched the two bullets as they popped out of the guns, and climbed up, up, up, up, up into the air.

Up, up, up, whizzed the bullets, up, up, up!—higher and higher and higher they climbed.

Goodness me! these two round hard bullets climbed until they were a mile high, and then they stopped. But they only stopped for an instant, and they started moving again. They began moving back to earth. They began to fall.

Yes, they were falling down to earth; they were falling faster and faster and faster, and goodness pity whatever they chanced to bump against! They were soon falling with such great speed that, had they hit a big stone, the stone would have been smashed into dust.

The two bullets fell and fell and fell, and they were falling exactly over the heads of the two bad and mischievous little-brother letters, who were standing very still, laughing and giggling.

And, oh, oh, oh! the two little letters did not know that the bullets were rushing upon them!

Dear, oh dear! is not this story getting to be sad? I almost wish I had not started it. And the two round hard bullets fell and fell and fell, faster and faster and

Tells About the Three Lost Letters

faster, until they were only five hundred feet high.

And they were falling directly upon the two poor, bad little-brother letters. Isn't this dreadful?

The two round bullets kept falling, faster and faster, until they were only ten feet from the heads of the poor, dear, bad little-brother letters.

Then, in less time than I can tell of it, the wicked round bullets were only two feet above the little-brothers' heads.

Boo, hoo, hoo! And then the bullets were only two inches above.

And then—and then—boo, hoo!—and then they were only one-half an inch above!

Wa-a--a-ah! Boo, hoo, wa-a-a-a-a-ah! and then only the width of a hair above!

Wa-a-a-ah!

Oh, I cannot finish this story! It would be cruel, it would be wicked! I must stop right here.

I must let the two hard, round bullets stay where they *now are*.

Yes, the bullets, now but the width of a hair above the heads of the little-brother letters, must stay there, just like this:

i-----j



CHAPTER 7

The Forgetful Letter B Tells the Story of the Clever Man

There was once a man who was very clever, but he was also very tricky.

Because of his cleverness he was always doing something wonderful. And because of his trickiness he was always making trouble.

And do you know what this man did once?

Why, he built a machine, and then he said to himself, "What a fine home this machine will be for the Alphabet letters to live in."

Then he went to President A and shook hands with him, and patted him on the head, and gave him some candy, and bought him some pretty cuff-buttons. And

Tells the Story of the Clever Man

President A was greatly pleased. He said to the man, "You are wonderfully kind-hearted. I like you ever so much. I wish I could do something for you, in return for the presents you have given me."

The man smiled, and curled his moustaches, and gave President A some more candy. Then he said, "Oh, I am giving you presents because you are such a good letter. You are such a wonderful letter, to be the President of the Alphabet. And do you know what I am going to do for you now?"

"No," answered President A. "What are you going to do for me now?"

Oh, this man was very, very clever, and he was full of sly tricks.

"Well," the man whispered, "I have built a very fine machine."

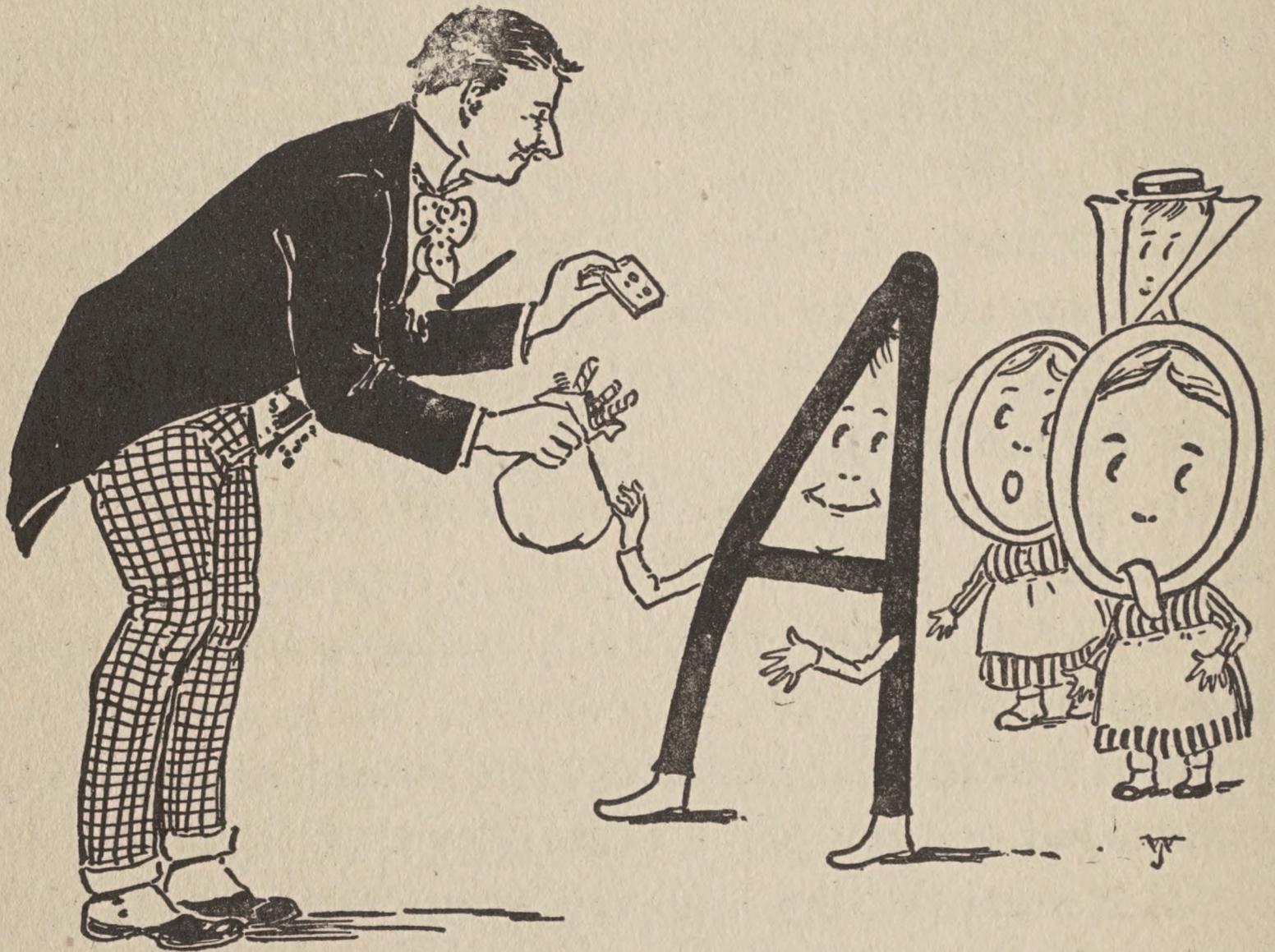
"What kind of machine is it?" President A asked, "and what are you going to do with it?"

"It is a typewriter, and I am going to give it to you to live in!" cried the man, clapping his hands and hopping up and down. "It is going to be your home."

"Oh, that is very good of you," said the letter A. "But I cannot leave the Alphabet letters, to go away and live by myself. I am their President, you know, and I must stay with them."

The Forgetful Letter B

“Do not worry about the other letters,” whispered the clever man. “They shall live in the machine with you. There is plenty of room for the whole Alphabet.”
The letter A thought for a moment, and then he said,



“All right. Since you have been so kind to build a nice typewriter-home for us, we will come and live in it.”

And then, do you know what happened?

Why, all the letters of the Alphabet, and their little-

Tells the Story of the Clever Man

brother letters, moved into the typewriter, and began to keep house there. They were very happy in their new home, and the man came to them every day to ask if they were comfortable, and if their new home pleased them.

President A would always say to the man, "Oh, thank you, we are ever and ever so comfortable, and we will live here as long as you will allow us to."

Things were running nicely with the Alphabet letters, until, one day, the man put a sheet of white paper into the typewriter. The letters did not like to share their home with a sheet of paper, and President A said to the man, "What is this sheet of paper doing here?"

The man replied, "Well, you see, I just put the paper in with you so you could teach it good manners. It does not behave itself very well, and I want you polite letters to show it how to be good. If the sheet of paper does anything it should not do, just punish it a little, please."

The man then went away. The next day he returned to the Alphabet's typewriter-home, and there was a very tricky look upon his face.

And, do you know what the man did?

He struck President A a sharp blow with his finger, when A was not looking. Wasn't that horrid?

The Forgetful Letter B

President A cried, "Ouch! Who hit me? Who dared to strike the President of the Alphabet?"

"It was the ill-mannered sheet of paper that struck you," whispered the man.

And President A declared he would punish the rude sheet of paper if it did such a thing again.

Very slyly, the man struck the letter A a second time.

"Ouch!" roared A, and he threw himself upon the paper with such force that the blow made the typewriter-home rattle. Indeed, the President left a mark of himself upon the rude sheet of paper, so hard did he strike it.

"Hooray!" shouted the clever man. "Hooray, hooray!" And then he very slyly struck me—the letter B—with his finger. And I hit the paper as hard as A had done, and left the mark of myself upon it. But the man had not fooled me a bit; I knew he had struck me, all the while. But I made believe I thought it was the sheet of paper. You see, I did not dare blame the man, because he was too big for me to hit.

After the man had struck me with his finger, he struck all the other letters, one after the other, over

Tells the Story of the Clever Man

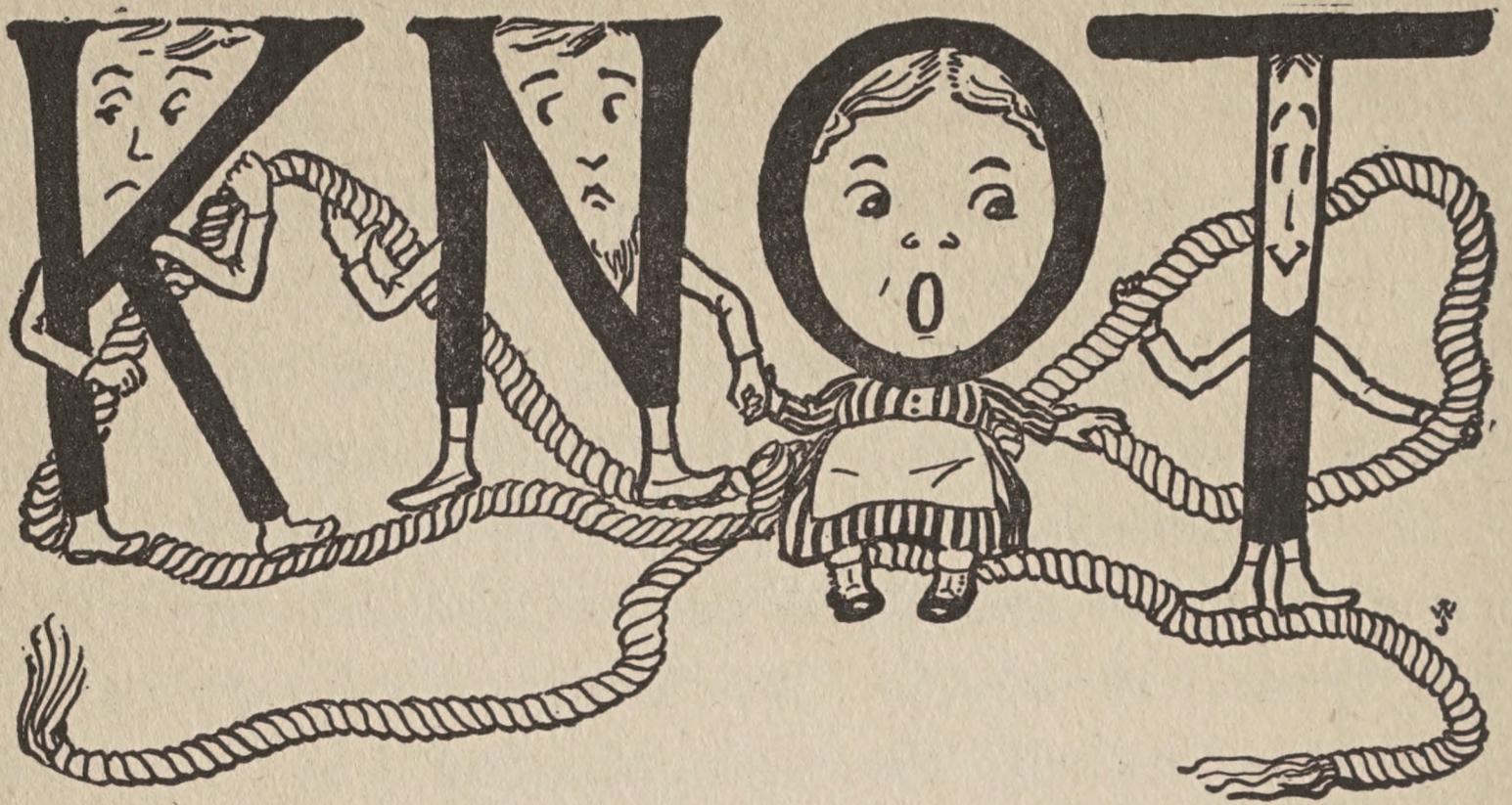
and over again, and they, in turn, struck the sheet of paper.

Before long, the paper was so covered with letter-marks that it looked like the printed page of a book.

And then—would you believe it? the man took the sheet of paper away, and put *another* rude sheet into our typewriter-home. The man kept striking us Alphabet letters with his finger, blaming it on the paper, and the Alphabet letters whacked, whacked, and whacked back, until this second sheet of paper looked like the printed page of a book.

Oh, dear me! It seems, now, that about all we letters do any more is teach good manners to rude sheets of white paper.

I wish that we had never moved into the typewriter-home!



CHAPTER 8

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Two Silent Letters

I remember!

Hip, hurray!—I remember!

Oh, yes, indeed!—I remember now the secret that I forgot about the letter K.

Do you wish to hear it?

This is really a double secret. It is about two letters—K and G.

The same secret fits them both.

Isn't that wonderful? A double secret!

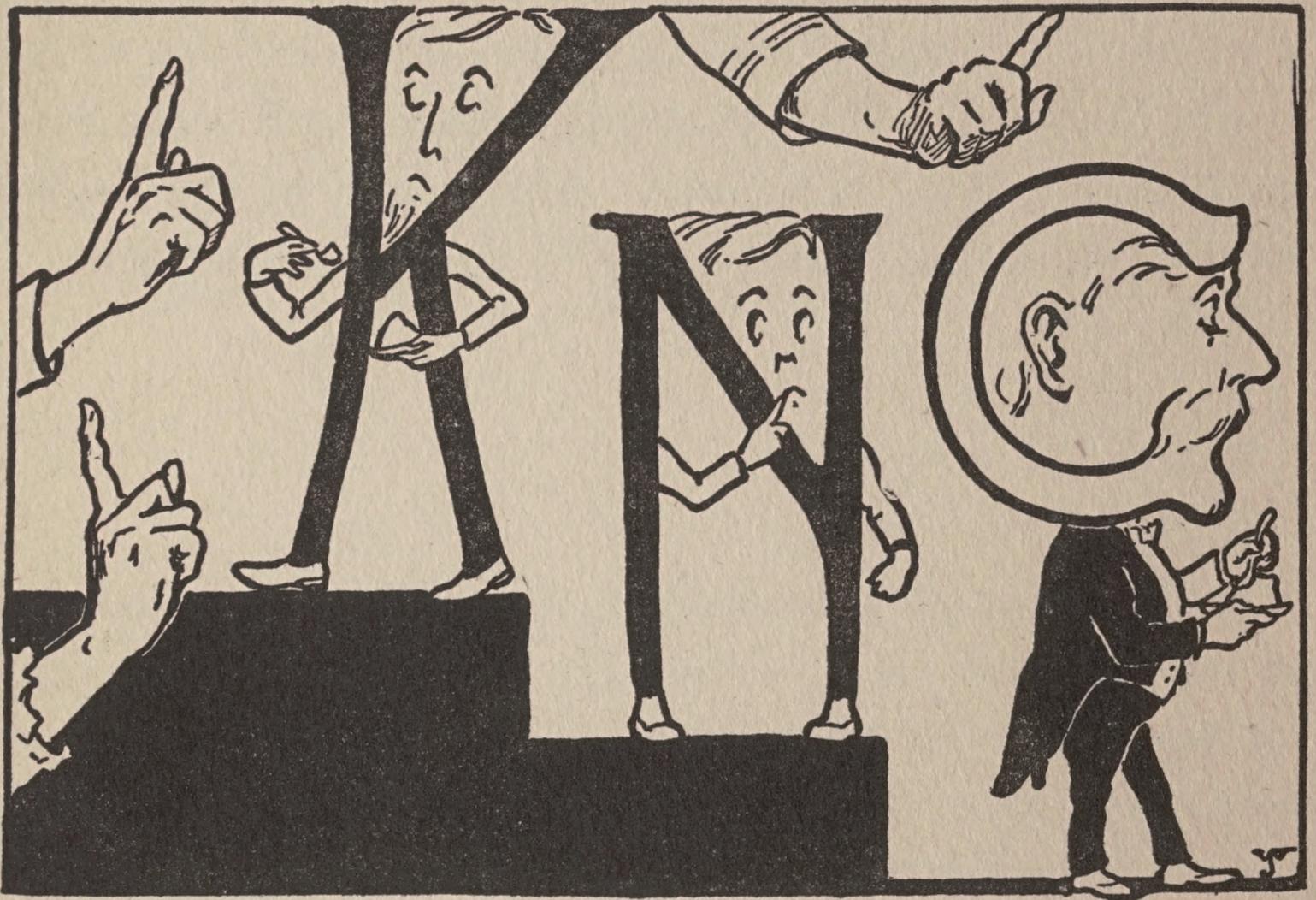
Just listen:

The letter K and the letter G are both jealous of the letter N. And they give letter-parties and invite

Tells About the Two Silent Letters

N to come and sit *beside* them, and they behave perfectly dreadful.

The other day K gave a party, and he invited N and E. He invited E twice—just to make N feel badly. The party was like this:



K-N-E-E.

It might as well have been an N-E-E party, without any K at all, so far as K was concerned. He did not join in the fun for a minute. Although he was giving the party, he acted as though he were not there. Never once did he *help* to say a word!

The Forgetful Letter B

He kept silent just because N sat next to him. And goodness knows he asked N to sit there.

And, mind you, at all the parties where K is the first letter, and N is the second letter, K is never polite. He always acts as though his mouth were glued shut; he never so much as whispers. He never helps to say a word.

Not longer ago than yesterday morning K gave four parties, one after the other. And he sat at the beginning of each party, and asked N to sit beside him:

K-N-O-W.

K-N-O-T.

K-N-I-T.

K-N-O-B.

And at each of these four parties, K's mouth seemed to be fastened tight shut. He kept silent! Oh, the jealous letter K, who gives a party, and then never helps say a word if N happens to be sitting beside him.

And it is exactly the same with the letter G. He is just as bad as K. They are both alike in their jealousy of N, and something should be done with them. They should be taught better manners.

If you will look in your dictionary, and turn to the pages where G is giving letter-parties—where G is the first letter—you will see that this is true.

Tells About the Two Silent Letters

You will see that whenever G gives a party, and asks N to sit beside him, like this, G-N, he always keeps silent, just like K does.

Oh, I am sure that something should be done about the matter.

Can you think of a way in which to cure K and G of this double secret about themselves?



CHAPTER 9

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Letter W

S-s-s-sh! Be very quiet, please.

Would you like to hear how the letter W came to change the style in the crowns that kings and princes and dukes wore?

Once upon a time there lived a king who wore a crown with six very sharp points.

He liked his sharp-pointed crown so well that he ordered his royal family, and the court nobles, to wear the same kind.

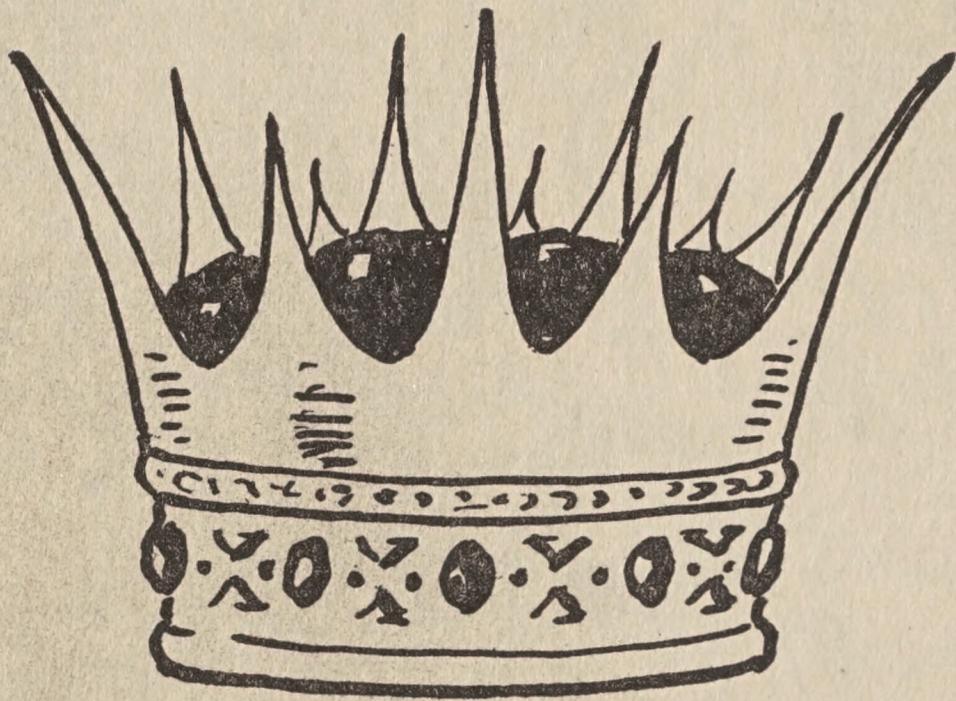
His wife, the queen, however, did not fancy the sharp points. But that made no difference to the king. 'Twas the king's will that crowns be sharp-pointed, and the king's will was law.



The Forgetful Letter B

One day the letter W was strolling through the grounds of the king's palace, and he came upon the queen, who was sitting on a marble bench weeping.

"Why does your majesty weep?" asked W.



"Oh," sighed the queen, "because I am obliged to wear a crown with horrid sharp points. And my three little princes must wear them, and my pretty princess."

"Indeed, that is too bad," whispered the letter W.

"Of course it is too bad," cried the queen. "It is an outrage. The sharp points make our crowns look like hay-forks! Ugh!" She sat in deep thought for a moment and then she said, "I will give five bags of gold and three bags of silver to the person who can

Tells About the Letter W

cause the king to do away with these sharp points on our crowns.”

The letter W then went his way, declaring to himself that he would win the five bags of gold and three bags of silver.

The next afternoon the king was holding a reception in his largest ballroom, and the place was crowded with lords and dukes and prime ministers and princes and princesses, all wearing sharp-pointed crowns.

The letter W, looking very wise and smiling to himself, entered the palace, and stood in the ballroom doorway.

The king and the queen and all the fine nobles were bowing to one another and shaking hands, and having a fine time, and their sharp-pointed crowns glistened like suns.

Suddenly the letter W shouted at the top of his voice, “Fire! Fire! Fire! Fire!”

Everyone in the ballroom stood still for a moment, screaming, and then they lowered their heads and scrambled for windows and doors. They pushed and tugged and they butted one another in their mad rush.

Yes, the queen and king and the fine nobles butted into one another, just like goats. And then there was trouble!

The Forgetful Letter B

And why shouldn't there have been trouble, with all these people bumping into one another with their sharp-pointed crowns?

Well, the king was first to make his way outside the ballroom. He was puffing, and his face was very red, and his clothes were torn and his back and sides were full of tiny stabs. The first thing he did was to take off his crown and wipe his face. Then he looked at the crown and gave a gasp of surprise. From one of its sharp points hung a duke's coat-sleeve; from another point there hung a count's coat-tail; from another point hung a prime minister's ruffled shirt-front.

"Oh, dear me!" cried the king, and he walked away from the palace as rapidly as his legs could carry him.

Yes, the king hastened away from his palace, and soon came to the royal pasture, where his royal cows were eating grass.

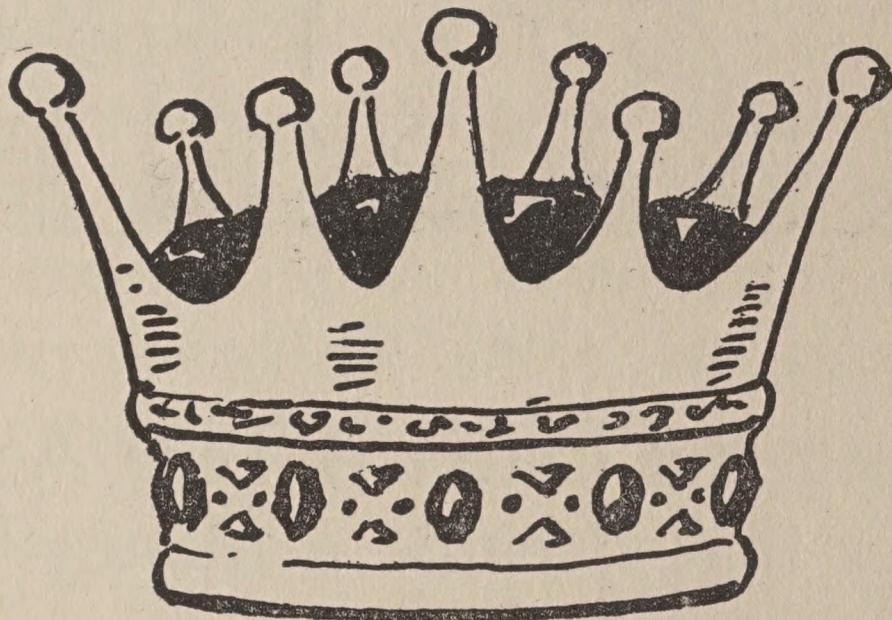
The king noticed that the cows wore round brass knobs upon the ends of their horns. He called to his cow-boy and said, "Tell me why my cows wear round knobs upon their horns."

And the cow-boy answered, "May it please your majesty, the cows are sometimes rude, and jab people with their sharp-pointed horns. So I fastened knobs on the ends of their horns, and now it does not hurt

Tells About the Letter W

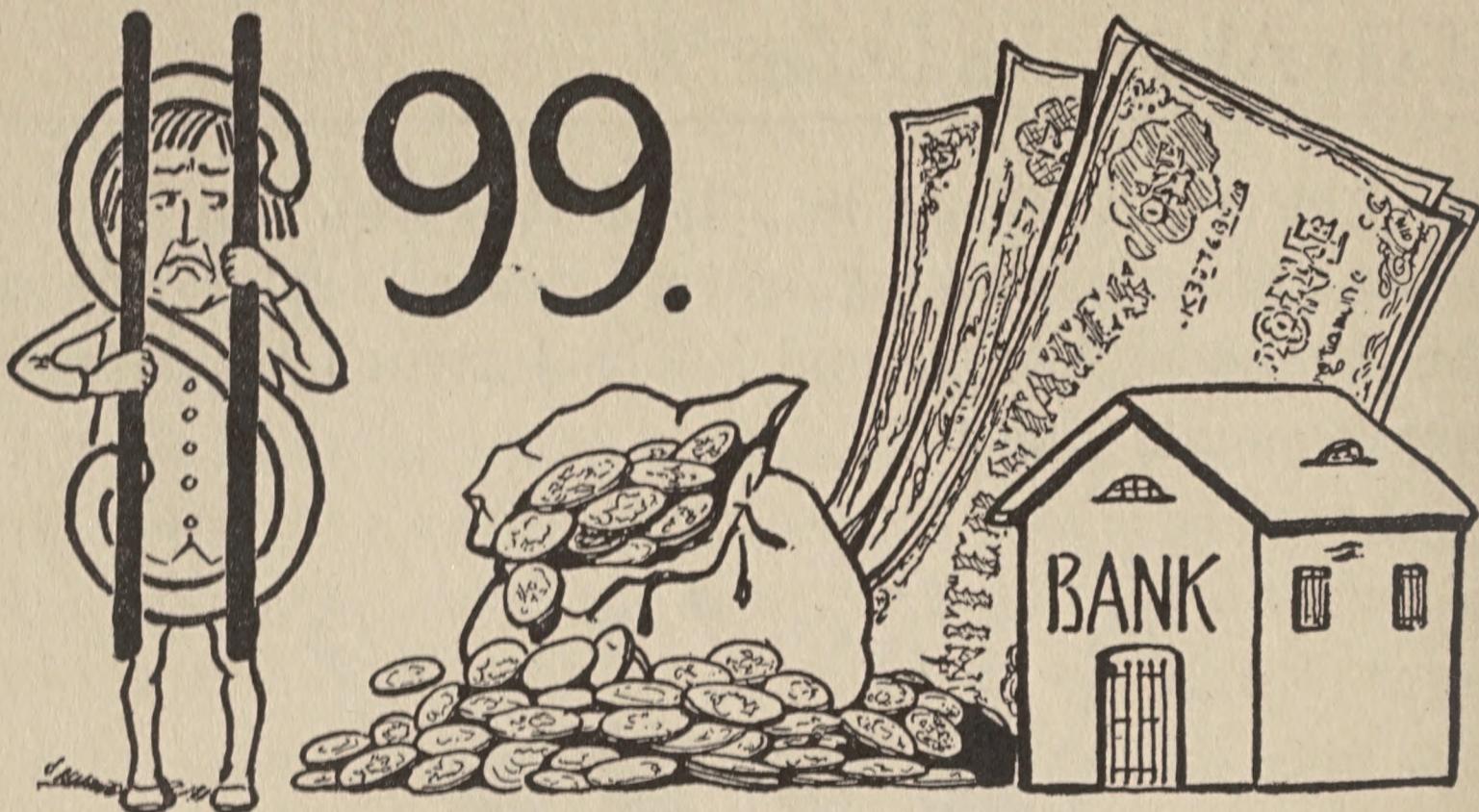
if anyone happens to be jabbed by them.”

And at once the king ordered that all the crowns in his kingdom have round knobs fastened upon their sharp points like this:



The queen was greatly delighted. She called for the letter W and said to him, “You are the one who caused the king to do away with sharp-pointed crowns. Here are five bags of gold and three bags of silver for you.”

And to this day round knobs are fastened upon the sharp points of crowns, which you will see if you will look at a picture of a king or a duke.



99.

CHAPTER 10

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About the Letter that Became a Money-Guard

I wish I were the letter S.

He has two jobs. One of his jobs is to work in the Alphabet; his other job is to guard all the money there is in the United States.

And S is the most wonderful guard!

Oh, how I wish I were the letter S!

Do you wonder how he came to be given the job of guarding all the money in the United States?

I will tell you.

Long ago, there was a grocer-man, who saved and saved his money until he had 99 dollars, and then he said to his wife, "What shall I do with all this money?"

Tells About Letter That Became Money Guard

If I bury it, someone might dig it up. If I hide it in the garret, the house might burn down. If I carry it in my pocket, I might spend it. What shall I do with my money?"

And the wife said, "Give it to a bear to keep for you. Bears cannot spend money."

So the grocer gave his 99 dollars to a big brown bear to keep for him, and the bear ate it up.

Yes, the bear ate up the 99 dollars, and the grocer-man felt very badly. He scolded his wife, and said to her, "Why did you tell me to give my money to a bear?"

"Dear me!" cried the wife, "I did not mean for you to give your money to a hungry bear."

Well, the grocer-man saved and saved again, until he had laid aside another 99 dollars, and he declared to his wife, "I will not give this money to a bear!"

The wife asked, "Whom will you have keep it for you?"

"I will use good sense this time," answered the man. "I will give it to a fish to keep for me." And he gave his 99 dollars to a fish that lived in the river.

Yes, the man gave his money to a fish, and that night a fisherman caught the fish and sold it.

"Dear me, dear me!" wailed the grocer-man. "Why

The Forgetful Letter B

are fish so silly as to swallow fishermen's hooks?"

But he was a thrifty grocer, and soon he had saved another 99 dollars. He puzzled for a long while, wondering about whom he could trust with his money. He lay awake nights wondering, and he wondered during



the day while he was measuring out sugar and salt, and putting turnips into bags. At last he said to his wife, "I have it! I will ask one of the Alphabet letters to stand guard over my money."

And at once the grocer-man came to the Alphabet,

Tells About Letter That Became Money Guard

and he looked over each letter to see which was the strongest. He felt President A's muscles, and shook his head. He felt G's muscles, and shook his head again. He felt K's muscles, and he felt Z's muscles, and he felt Y's muscles, and he felt the muscles of every letter in the Alphabet until he came to S.

Then he said to the letter S, "Let me feel your muscles."

The letter S thought for a moment and answered, "Please excuse me, Mr. Grocer-man, I have some business to attend to. I will be back shortly, however, and then you can feel my muscles."

So the letter S went to the Alphabet gymnasium, and he swung Indian clubs and chinned himself and turned flip flops and lifted heavy dumb-bells until his muscles were as big as an elephant's.

Then he came back and rolled up his sleeves and said to the grocer-man, "Now you can feel my muscles!"

My gracious! The grocer-man was astonished when he felt the muscles of the letter S. "You are stronger than Samson!" he cried. "Now I will give you a fine job."

"What sort of a job will you give me?" asked S, a happy smile spreading over his face.

The Forgetful Letter B

“I will give you a job guarding my 99 dollars,” replied the man.

“Oh!” groaned S, looking disappointed. “I thought you were going to give me a job in a circus, as a strong man.”

“Guarding 99 dollars is a much better job than traveling about the country with clowns and lions and tents,” said the grocer-man.

“Well, then,” grumbled the letter S, “I suppose I will have to take the job. What must I do to be a money-guard?”

The grocer-man answered, “All you will have to do will be to hold a big stick in your hand, like a policeman, and stand very still beside my money.”

“Oh, that will be fine!” cried S in delight. “Holding the big stick will make me look like a real policeman. But why cannot I hold two big sticks—then I will look like two policemen!”

“Anything to please you,” replied the grocer. “You may hold a big stick in each hand while you are guarding my 99 dollars.”

So the letter S was given two big sticks, and he held one in each hand, and stood on guard beside the grocer-man’s 99 dollars, looking like this:

\$99

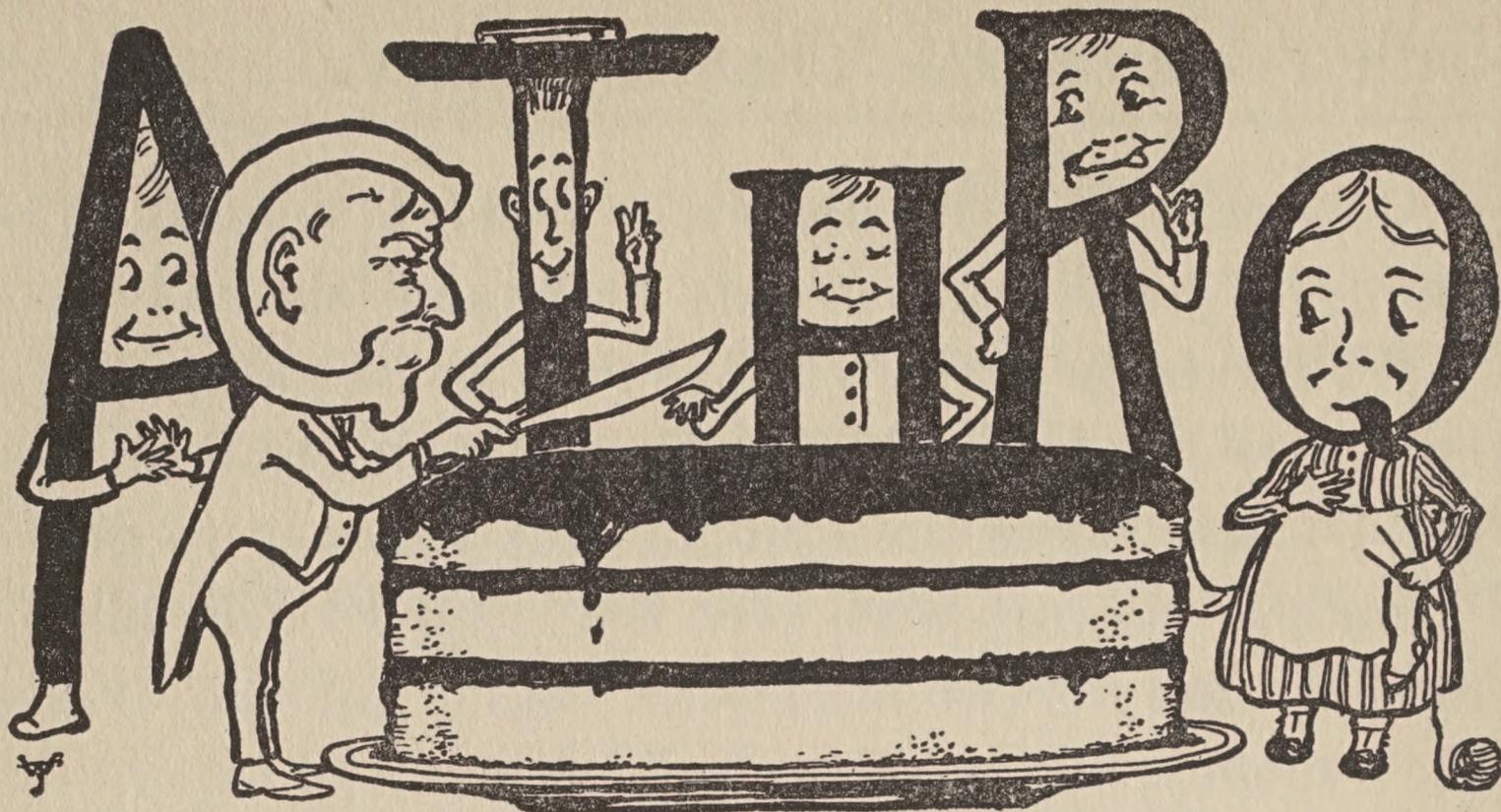
Tells About Letter That Became Money Guard

Do you see the two big sticks that S is holding in his hands? And doesn't he look brave and strong?

Well, S turned out to be the very finest money-guard that ever lived, and before long, people from all over the United States brought him their money to guard.

And, I tell you, whenever the letter S, with his big muscles and his two big sticks, stands guard over people's money, the burglars had better keep away.

Have *you* any money you wish guarded?



CHAPTER 11

The Forgetful Letter B Tells About Santa Claus and Canta Slaus

'Twas the night before Christmas,
And all through the Alphabet
Not a creature was stirring,
Not even a mouse!

Isn't that a beautiful poem?

I think it is, and I am the letter B, who knows all about poems.

And, oh! isn't Canta Slaus grand? When I say 'Canta Slaus' I am speaking of Santa Claus' brother.

Santa Claus comes to see *you* on Christmas eve, and his brother, Canta Slaus, comes to see the Alphabet letters.

Tells About Santa Claus and Canta Slaus

I do not think there is much difference between your Santa and our Canta, except in age. Santa Claus is 2059 years old. And Canta Slaus is 2011 years old.

Mrs. Claus-Slaus, who is the mother of the two brothers, does not allow the younger brother to stay out as late on Christmas eve as she does the older brother.

Santa can stay out until after midnight, while Canta must be home and in bed by ten o'clock sharp. So you can see that we Alphabet letters have our stockings filled earlier than yours are filled.

And I will tell you something else. It is a secret. Our Canta Slaus gives Christmas presents only to the letters that send him a birthday present on his birthday, which is three days before Christmas.

This is not selfish of Canta Slaus; it merely shows that he likes to be remembered as well as anyone else. Of course your Santa Claus does not do this way. Oh, no, indeed.

And now I am going to tell you a story.

Once, long ago, when it was three days before Christmas, each Alphabet letter made a birthday present to give Canta Slaus. All the letters, excepting the stuttering Z, made neckties to give.

The letter Z made Canta a chocolate cake.

The Forgetful Letter B

Oh, my, that chocolate cake looked good! All the letters gathered 'round the cake, looking at it and looking at it, and their mouths watered like everything.

After a while President A whispered to the proud letter G, "I wish it were *my* birthday cake!"

And the proud letter G whispered, "Let us send Z on an errand. While he is gone we will eat the cake."

So the stuttering letter Z was sent to the store for some holly, and while he was gone the other Alphabet letters ate the chocolate cake that had been baked for Canta's birthday. And after they had eaten the cake, they sent their neckties to Canta.

Yum, yum, yum!—I can taste that cake yet!

Well, the poor letter Z felt very badly. He cried and cried, and said, "N-n-now I will not be given a Christmas p-p-present! Oh, dear, m-m-me!"

Christmas eve came, and while all the letters were sleeping—Z had cried himself to sleep—Canta Slaus came down the chimney and put a candy mouse in President A's stocking, and in all the other stockings excepting Z's he put candy cheeses. Of course he did not put anything in Z's stocking.

After Canta had filled the stockings he hurried back to the North Pole, and was in bed by ten o'clock sharp.



The Forgetful Letter B

An hour passed by. The candy mouse in President A's stocking began to twitch its nose.

"I smell CHEESE!" whispered the mouse, and he climbed out of A's stocking, and hopped into my stocking and ate my candy cheese.

"Yum, yum, yum!" said the candy mouse, "this is good cheese!"

Sniff, sniff, sniff! And out of my stocking the candy mouse climbed, and over into C's stocking he hopped, and he ate C's candy cheese.

After he had eaten the candy cheese in C's stocking, he ate the candy cheese that was in D's stocking, and E's stocking, and then he—oh, well, he ate and ate and ate, until he came to Z's stocking, which was EMPTY.

"I guess I have eaten all the candy cheeses," sighed the greedy candy mouse, and then he curled up in the toe of Z's stocking and went to sleep.

Then do you know what happened?

Your Santa Claus came driving by. And he stopped his reindeers on the Alphabet's roof. He sprang from his sleigh and said to himself, "My brother told me he was not going to give the stuttering Z a Christmas present. Poor little letter! How fortunate that there were one too many presents in my pack; I will give Z the present I have left over."

Tells About Santa Claus and Canta Slaus

So down the Alphabet's chimney Santa scampered, and he tip-toed to where Z's stocking hung, and dropped the left-over present into it, right on top of the sleeping candy mouse that was stuffed with twenty-four candy cheeses!

Ho, ho, ho, HO!

The left-over present was a *candy cat*!

And then Santa Claus whisked back up the chimney.



CHAPTER 12

The Forgetful Letter B Tells You His Last Story, and Bids You Good Night

As this is my last story, I hope you will like it. It is about Mr. Etc. Are you acquainted with him?

He and the Alphabet letters are fine friends, and he comes to visit us every day, and we always ask him to stay for dinner.

Yes, we invite Mr. Etc to stay for dinner, and he always says, "Thank you so much. I shall be delighted." And then he sits down at the table with us. When everyone is seated, President A raps upon the table and tells us what there is to eat. He always does this. He raps—tap, tap, tap, and says, "For dinner to-day we will eat squash, cream-puffs, etc!"

Tells You His Last Story

Then everybody claps his hands, excepting Mr. Etc. He does not seem to like the food that President A says we will eat. He always turns sort of pale, and whispers to President A, "I beg your pardon, what did you say we are to eat to-day?"

And President A cries in a loud voice, "For dinner to-day we will eat squash, cream-puffs, etc!"

"Ah, yes! To be sure!" is what Mr. Etc then says. "Hum-m-m-m—oh, yes, indeed!" And then he puts on his hat and hurries away, without waiting to eat a bite.

Well, I had better be telling my story. It is about how Mr. Etc came to be friends with the Alphabet letters.

Once there was a very rich man, and he was not at all happy. He had more wealth than he knew what to do with, but that was not the cause of his unhappiness. What troubled him was his name. He had too much name.

His name was so long that he could not carry it. He had to leave it at home, and when people asked him who he was, he was obliged to take them to his home and show them, instead of telling them on the spot.

Well, the rich man felt very badly. And one day while walking along the street he felt so badly that

The Forgetful Letter B

he began to cry. At that moment Mr. Etc happened to pass by. He said to the rich man, "Why are you crying?"

"Boo, hoo, hoo!" sobbed the rich man, "come with me to my home and I will show you." So Mr. Etc went to the rich man's home. And the rich man pointed to his name, while the tears ran in streams down his cheeks.

Oh, dear! no wonder the poor fellow cried!

He had one *last* name, which was Smith. That was all right, of course. But he also had fifteen *first* names. Just think of it! If your father's name were John Henry Jones, how would he write it? He would write it like this:

J. H. Jones.

Which would be no trouble at all. But when Mr. Etc looked upon the rich man's name this was what he saw:

Q. W. E. R. T. Y. U. I. O. P. A. S. D. F. G. Smith!

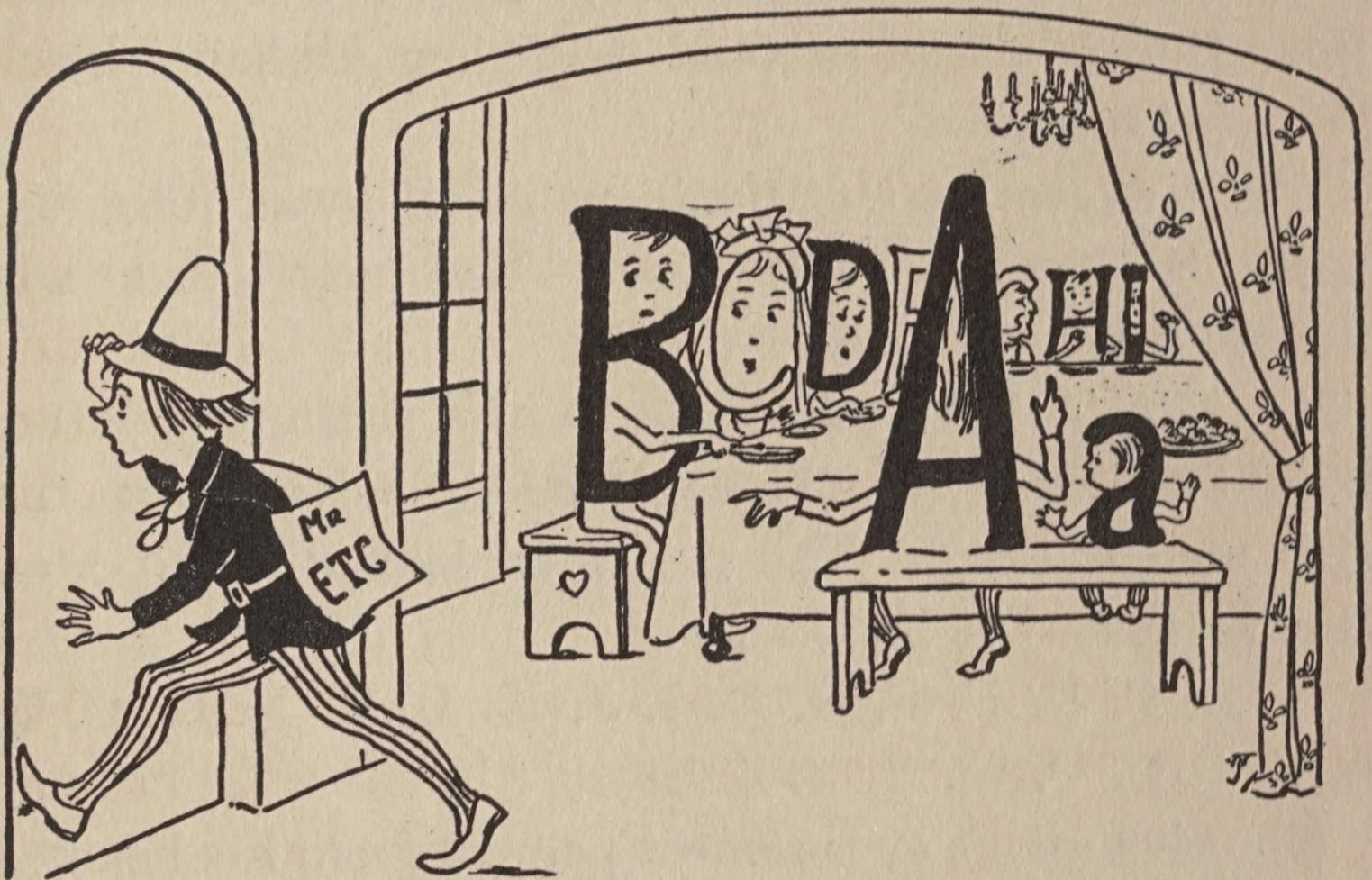
Yes, Mr. Etc saw this great long name, and he also saw a sign hanging above the name, which read:

REWARD!

Mr. Smith, who is very rich, will give one big bag of diamonds to the one who has a longer name than his!

Tells You His Last Story

After Mr. Etc had looked at Mr. Smith's long name for several minutes, he turned and said, "I pity you, Mr. Q. W. E. R. T. Y. U. I. O. P. A. S. D. F. G. Smith. And I am glad to know you are so kind hearted as to give a bag of diamonds to the one who has a longer



name than yours. Will you come and visit me to-morrow?"

"Boo, hoo!" sighed Mr. Smith, "yes, I will come visit you to-morrow. Where do you live?"

Mr. Etc really had no home, but he was polite, and pretended he had one, so he said, "I live in—I live in

The Forgetful Letter B

the Alphabet!” He said that he lived in the Alphabet because it was the first place that entered his mind.

Well, the next afternoon Mr. Etc bought a box of round black periods, and hastened to the Alphabet home. He gave each Alphabet letter a round black period, as a present, and said, “May I live with you this afternoon, and pretend that your Alphabet home is my own home?”

“To be sure!” cried President A, who was delighted with his round black period. “You may live beside the stuttering letter Z.

Mr. Etc took his place beside the stuttering letter Z, and no sooner was he comfortably settled than the rich man entered. The rich man looked about him, and this is what he saw:

A. B. C. D. E. F. G. H. I. J. K. L. M. N. O. P. Q.
R. S. T. U. V. W. X. Y. Z. Etc!

The rich man’s eyes almost popped from his head as he saw Mr. Etc, and, without saying a word, he turned and ran back to his own home. There, he filled a large bag with sparkling diamonds.

Then he returned to the Alphabet home and gave the bag of diamonds to Mr. Etc.

Ho, ho! Mr. Etc was too shy to ask the rich man why the diamonds were given him, and he was too shy

The Forgetful Letter B

to not take them. So he just said, "Thank you," and let it go at that.

After the rich man had finished his visit, Mr. Etc gave each of the Alphabet letters a pretty diamond.

And from that day on, the letters and Mr. Etc have been fine friends.

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